

Introduction

During the summer of 2010, hundreds of people gave thousands of hours of their time to define creative and immediate actions the City of Seattle could take to become a carbon neutral city.

Why did we devote our precious summer days to meetings and writing reports? We want change, and we believe this change must happen quickly. We collectively feel the hot threats of a climate crisis and an economic meltdown, and we are eager to work as partners with Seattle government to transform “business as usual” into decisive actions towards a positive future. We are students, artists, engineers, planners, landscape architects, farmers, parents, teachers, business owners, lawyers, doctors, and corporate executives. We follow the news. We’re politically savvy. We know the City is broke and we know the government has obligations, mandates, and roles it must fulfill. We also know Seattle has staff, facilities, and material resources that can be redirected towards small, thriving, vibrant neighborhoods. The building blocks of a carbon neutral city are neighborhoods where people find it easy and enjoyable to live, work, and play.

Community Engagement Process

A working group of about 20 community volunteers met once a week for 10 weeks to brainstorm ideas on neighborhoods’ contribution to a carbon neutral city. Subgroups created an on-line survey on carbon neutral neighborhoods translated into six languages (including a version for children). Working group members met with hundreds of people: Department of Neighborhoods and other City staff, non-profits, Community Councils, school groups, and local Chambers, to generate ideas on carbon neutral neighborhoods. These ideas and others were sifted and entered into an interactive IdeaScale.com website that allowed for on-line discussions and voting on over 150 innovative ideas. Our initial recommendations are based on these meetings, surveys, and on-line tools and we believe they are all achievable within one to three years.

Recommendations

- **Rezone for resilient neighborhoods.** Define, plan for, and support a range of services to meet the needs of each neighborhood so that it can thrive as a “hyper-local”, walk-able, livable community. Review City Comp Plans, Neighborhood Plans, and departmental work plans through the 3 lenses of climate change, peak oil, and economic resilience. Provide avenues for quick and creative start-ups for economic revitalization including mom & pop stores, a variety of local transportation alternatives, and repurposed City facilities such as community centers.
- **Improve communication between the City and local neighborhoods.** Provide clear information about existing “carbon neutral” City programs. Provide open access by neighborhood to utility usage (energy, water, waste) in order to have a baseline for tracking and inspiring change. Include neighborhood groups in all sustainable community planning processes. Collaborate with other governmental jurisdictions and make efforts to keep meetings and information clear, open, and transparent.
- **Move goods and people efficiently.** We applaud the City's continuing efforts to make it easier for people to choose healthy and cost effective means of travel and support the prioritization of low carbon transportation options. We recognize moving people is just one piece of the puzzle, and support innovative options to power the smooth flow of emergency vehicles, mass transit, and the essential flow goods and services that power our local economy.

Next steps

1. **Broad participation.** While our outreach produced a wealth of great ideas, we were struck by our inability, even in partnership with the City, of reaching diverse neighborhood leaders. Unless many more people are participating and invested in building a carbon neutral city, this effort will not succeed. We need to devote more resources toward getting everyone on board.
2. **Keep it local.** Foster and support neighborhood-specific solutions such as energy districts, local leader support, and innovation zones individually tailored to the geography, culture, and land use patterns of each neighborhood.
3. **Keep it going.** We need to define an ongoing process and engagement strategy with the City staff, City Council and sustainable community groups. We have a lot more work to do, to build vibrant, carbon neutral, and economically secure local neighborhoods, and we will need real support and resources to make it all happen.

We look forward to working closely with City staff and City Council in the future, and thank all of our participants and the Council for their support this summer.

Recommended Action Strategies

The Carbon Neutral Neighborhood group recommends well over 20 actions in our White Paper that can be evaluated for implementation by the City within the next one to three years. Our recommended actions fall within three broad categories:

1. **Improving Livability and Resiliency in Neighborhoods** by strengthening the local economy, localizing resources, enhancing neighborhood walk-ability, and improving access to local food.
2. **Improving Communication, Collaboration and Transparency** using community building tools and programs, supporting education and job enhancement, and developing more open City databases.
3. **Improving Mobility Within and Between Neighborhoods** by considering low carbon transportation options for both people, and essential goods and services, to power our local economy.

The following are representative of some of the actions being recommended by the Carbon Neutral Neighborhood group.

Recommended Action	Carbon Impacts	Costs & Benefits to the City
Rezone to encourage new small commercial development	Mobile vending, new “mom and pop” stores in residential areas, incentives for small business owners to develop small commercial pockets, will contribute to our neighborhoods’ health and vitality, and reduce transportation emissions.	New jobs and businesses increase tax base. Local production and purchasing strengthens community ties AND has a positive multiplier effect on neighborhood and City economy. http://seattlenetwork.org/why-buy-local http://tinyurl.com/mobilecarts
Collaborate with neighborhood organizations to create and manage a neighborhood sustainability clearinghouse	Repurpose existing City buildings such as community centers to dispense information on carbon neutrality and offer green careers training. Collaborate with neighborhood organizations to create and manage a central clearinghouse website and/or physical office locations that will facilitate neighborhoods’ work toward carbon reduction and resiliency.	Current City programs dealing with carbon neutrality are in departmental silos and often difficult to access. Consolidate and clarify existing City resources to provide clear, prioritized information on the best and most effective ways to save energy (and money).
Open City records on resource use	Openness and transparency are important tools for understanding the challenges and opportunities in existing systems. If we don’t measure and have feedback, it is impossible to prioritize, plan, make informed decisions or come up with innovative local solutions.	Require SCL, SPU, SDOT, DPD and other city departments to publish neighborhood or zip code level data on resource use and waste on an at least monthly basis to help measure, track and inspire progress of all carbon reduction efforts.
Implement a no-idling policy	Properly time traffic lights to reduce idling when city bridges are open (and elsewhere). Institute stricter anti-idling rules, improve signage at bridges, and conduct an anti-idling campaign to also reduce acceleration and deceleration.	Time lights to prioritize walking, biking and transit. Properly timed lights can allow cyclists to have a safe head start on other traffic while also minimizing idling. http://pscleanair.org/actions/vehicles/noidle.aspx
Connect urban villages internally and to each other	Provide a range of options: bike boulevards and walkways, bus-ways, greenways and commercial vehicle corridors.	Support inter- and intra-neighborhood mobility needs while reducing carbon emissions and enhancing the quality of life within our neighborhoods

Introduction

We envision a Seattle in which carbon emissions are reduced and local community resilience is strengthened through policies, projects, and programs that: foster civic engagement; strengthen local economies; facilitate lifelong learning; promote human and environmental health; reduce and remediate environmental impacts throughout all of our city's neighborhoods; and ensure equal access to employment, resources and services.

The programs recommended by the Neighborhoods Sector would advance these goals by promoting clusters of coordinated projects and policies that can be launched within 1-3 years, have little or no monetary costs, and build on existing successes. These project clusters would go a long way toward establishing the physical, relational and cultural infrastructure required to move Seattle towards carbon neutrality.

Strategy/Program:

IMPROVE LIVABILITY AND RESILIENCY IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Strengthen Local Economies

Diversified and self-sufficient localized economies are key to both environmental and economic sustainability, as well as the well being of our neighborhoods. The following proposals would create new careers, promote locally owned small businesses, and encourage local production and purchasing, while strengthening community ties and reducing transportation emissions.

- Encourage the emergence of more small commercial pockets with “mom and pop” stores in residential areas, through zoning regulations, financial incentives to small business owners, and the creation of guidelines to ensure new small businesses contribute to neighborhood’s health and vitality.
- Implement neighborhood and regional Buy Local programs through new city ordinance.
- Retrofit all city buildings (residential and commercial) for energy efficiency, using the local workforce and a revolving source of low-interest credit, such as City bonds, to allow homeowners to pay the cost of upgrades over time, through their utility bills (e.g., PACE).
- Expand farmers markets to all city neighborhoods, by changing permitting rules for public spaces. This would address unequal neighborhood access to fresh food, improve public health, reduce car rides, and strengthen neighborhood economies.

Enhance Neighborhood Walkability

Promoting neighborhood walkability would place desired resources and businesses within a shorter distance, and make walking more appealing, safe, and rewarding. The following projects would enhance walkability, improve human health, build community,

reduce CO₂ emissions, and strengthen neighborhood economies:

- Install public green spaces within walking distance of every Seattle residence. This could include the restructuring of traffic patterns to create more neighborhood parks and pedestrian zones or car-free streets.
- Encourage installation of community art, benches, information kiosks and native plants in neighborhood corridors, to enhance their aesthetic appeal and give them local character.
- Make information on local businesses and resources widely available via walking maps and “walk score” website.

Food Security and Availability

A large portion of our carbon emissions comes from the transportation of foods from far away as well as from non-organic production methods. Investing in local (organic) food production reduces CO₂ emissions, while also increasing food security, improving health, and supporting the local economy.

- Expand and promote urban farming zones in community gardens and city parks, to serve as a primary food source for neighborhood residents. Beyond the P-Patch concept, these urban farms would provide food for the larger community and create local jobs.
- Expand farmers markets to all city neighborhoods (*see above under Strengthen Local Economies*)

Strategy/Program:

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND TRANSPARENCY

Openness and transparency are important tools for understanding where the challenges and opportunities are in existing systems. If we don't measure and have feedback, it is impossible to prioritize and plan. Ensuring information and educational resources can be found, and that priorities are clearly defined, can empower individuals, groups and businesses to make informed decisions or come up with innovative solutions.

Tools for Building Community

Community building work is needed to develop grassroots support toward a carbon neutral future and provide support and context to neighborhood residents as we endeavor to embrace new knowledge and habits:

- Collaborate with neighborhood organizations to create and manage a central clearinghouse website and/or physical office locations that will facilitate neighborhoods' work toward carbon reduction and resiliency. Offer information to residents, list volunteer opportunities in each neighborhood, provide online tools for neighbors to communicate, facilitate an intra- neighborhood skill and resource exchange, and provide tools for community-building leaders/volunteers (i.e., “block captains”).

- Support work of community-builders and organizers in each neighborhood via stipends and seed-grants, possibly using local property tax.

Education and Transparency

All of our investments toward a carbon neutral future depend on buy-in and participation by the public. These in turn are contingent on effective, concerted and sustained efforts of public education and promotion of the new opportunities available to our communities as we create a sustainable future.

- Require SCL, SPU, SDOT, DPD and other city departments to more regularly and openly publish information on energy, water, waste and transportation use. Push for neighborhood or zip code level data on a monthly basis. *This type of information is required to help measure, track and inspire progress of all efforts.*
- Consolidate and clarify existing City resources to provide clear, prioritized information on the best and most effective ways to save energy, water, fuel and money.
- Create, promote, and implement local Greening-Your-Business programs.

Strategy/Program:

REFINE MOBILITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOODS

The need for to move people, and the goods and services that power our local economies, beyond walking range, will continue to exist. Our challenge is to facilitate this mobility in the most energy efficient ways possible. The following proposals would support inter- and intra-neighborhood mobility needs while reducing carbon emissions and enhancing the quality of life within our neighborhoods:

Transit/Transportation Issues

Properly time traffic lights to reduce idling when city bridges are open (and elsewhere). Institute stricter anti-idling rules, improve signage at bridges, and conduct an anti-idling campaign to also reduce acceleration and deceleration. Time lights so that cyclists -- and pedestrians -- have a safe head start on other traffic.

- Improve and increase transit availability *between* urban villages/neighborhoods.
- Increase and promote incentives for households with one or no cars (e.g., transit discounts, tax breaks)
- Promote bicycles ridership:
 - Incentivize electric bikes and ensure that as the new Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure is rolled out, the City takes into account electric bicycle charging.
 - Provide better services for bike riders, such as covered bike racks and separated bike lanes that connect urban villages to each other and to the urban center.

We'd like to thank the following Seattle Neighbors who participated in the Carbon Neutral Neighborhoods group in meetings, on-line surveys, and/or helping to write reports:

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Esther Handy, Council	Pennie O'Grady, Green Lake
Fran Koehler, Greenwood	Peter Hahn, SDOT
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Gary Lichtenstein, West Seattle	Rafael Ravenet, Downtown
Gene Homicki, West Seattle	Rebecca Deehr, SDOT
Harry Tracy, Broadview	Rob Mattson, DON
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Heather Trim, Queen Anne	Sahar Fathi, Council
Helen Lowe, West Seattle	Sandra Mallory, DPD
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Tom Allen, Northeast
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Victor Odlivak, Belltown
Wendy Watson, DON
Yoram Bernet, Wallingford
Yun Pitre, DON

Many of us belong to multiple organizations. Participants were active in one or more the following organizations. These organizations do not necessarily support the views of CN Neighborhoods group.

2People
350.org
Art4Justice
Ballard Community Council
Bryant Community Council
Carbon Salon
Cascade Bike Club
Cascade Edible Landscapes
Chamber of Commerce Alliance
City Council
Climate Dialogs
Cool Mom
Cool Mom Wallingford
Creatives4Community
Department of Neighborhoods Service Centers
Department of Planning and Development
Department of Transportation
Energy Transitions NW
FeetFirst
Fremont Chamber of Commerce
Global Exchange
Greenwood Community Council
Historic Seattle
Interra Project
Jackson Park Community Council
Loyal Heights Community Council
Mayor's Office
NW SEED
Objective Consulting
Office Nomads
Office of Economic Development
One NW
Phinney Chamber of Commerce
Race for Carbon Zero
Rainier Beach Community Council
Salish Sea Trading Cooperative
SeaChar

Seattle Good Business Network
Seattle Green Schools Network
Seattle Innovators
Seattle Parks
Seattle Public Utilities
Seattle Tilth
Seattle YMCA Youth Service Corps
Simplicity Circles
South Park Information and Resource Center
Spokespeople
Sustainable Ballard
Sustainable Belltown
Sustainable Capitol Hill
Sustainable Central District
Sustainable Crown Hill
Sustainable Downtown
Sustainable Green Lake
Sustainable Greenwood Phinney
Sustainable Magnolia
Sustainable Northeast
Sustainable Queen Anne
Sustainable Seattle
Sustainable Shoreline
Sustainable SooZo
Sustainable South Seattle
Sustainable Wallingford
Sustainable West Seattle
SvR
Transition Seattle
University of Washington
Uptown Queen Anne Community Council
Urban Sparks
Wallingford Chamber of Commerce
Wallingford Community Council
Wallingford Community Senior Center
Washington State Green Schools
Zero Waste Seattle

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